



**AUDIO FILE**

Streaming DAC/amplifier. Rated at 250W/8ohm  
 Made by: Citech Co., Ltd, South Korea  
 Supplied by: Henley Audio Ltd, UK  
 Telephone: 01235 511166  
 Web: <https://eng.hifirose.com>; [www.henleyaudio.co.uk](http://www.henleyaudio.co.uk)  
 Price: £3399



# HiFi Rose RS520

Having taken what looked like an abrupt turn with the launch of its bonkers-styled – but great-sounding – RA180 integrated amplifier [HFN Jul '22], Seoul-based HiFi Rose brings us the more conventional-looking, but no less impressive, all-in-one RS520.

Available in black and silver, and with the company's usual all-aluminium construction, it comfortably undercuts the £5499 RA180, but uses similar Class D-based amplification and has all

*'HiFi Rose's amplifier reveals so much while driving so hard'*

the network audio functionality, underpinned by the company's Android-based Rose OS platform, of its earlier streamers. However, it's not merely a mix of the RA180 amp and RS150 network player [HFN Jun '21], as it puts its own twist on the technologies built-in. Not least there's a switch from the AKM-based DAC stage of the RS150 to ESS's latest ES9038PRO 'Sabre' device.

With its claimed 250W/8ohm output the RS520 is – by a very considerable margin – the most powerful of the new generation of 'just add speakers' network receivers. It's also generously equipped when it comes to its

streaming capability. Via the network connection – either Ethernet or Wi-Fi through a dongle – it will play music from a local library at up to 768kHz/32-bit PCM and DSD 512/22.4MHz. It also offers MQA decoding, access to streaming services including Qobuz, Spotify Connect and Tidal, plus Bluetooth and AirPlay. It's also Roon-ready.

There's comprehensive video compatibility too, allowing content to be streamed and played either on the amp's big, bright touchscreen or to a TV connected to the unit's HDMI output. There's also an HDMI eARC input, to accept sound and share control with suitable TVs which, in practice, means most modern sets.

On the subject of inputs, the RS520 also has one set of analogue line ins, along with optical and coaxial digital inputs/outputs. There are then three USB 3.0 ports where external storage (up to 10TB apiece) can be connected, plus USB-B for computer audio. Local playback is also possible if you fit your own SATA SSD (up to 4TB).

**FULLSCALE FUN**  
 As is usual with HiFi Rose products, the RS520 offers a staggering range of settings within its menus, including PCM resampling and digital filter options and, via its display, a virtual graphic equaliser. But even if you just skip straight to listening, it excites with a sound of

**ABOVE: The RS520's 12.6in touchscreen TFT display provides fingertip control over everything from input selection to menu setup, supplementing the Rose app and IR handset. Under the bonnet there's a screened switchmode PSU feeding a Cortex hexa-core CPU, ES9038PRO DAC and preamp stage plus GAN-transistor Class D power amp**

surefooted control and detail, deep, tight bass, and excellent insight into all the layers of the music. Above all, it's massively enjoyable.

The soundtrack to Madness's lockdown special *The Get Up!* [Union Square] shows the amp's ability to convey the organised chaos. The sheer vitality of the music is all part and parcel of the live Madness experience where Suggs and Co. are still clearly having a blast more than 45 years after forming, and the power and clarity of the RS520 provides a constant temptation to wind up the level and enjoy it even more.

Springsteen's cover of 'What Becomes Of The Brokenhearted' [*Only The Strong Survive*; Columbia], sees the amplifier delivering The Boss's hoarse, careworn growl with real character against the big, lush arrangements. Similarly, the bass and drums power the funk of 'The Invisible Man' and the headlong rush of 'Breakthrough' on Queen's 1989 album *The Miracle* [EMI] – both Freddie Mercury's vocals and Brian May's guitars here sounding as charismatic as ever.

With such music the powerful RS520 is in its element, revealing so much while driving so hard, yet it easily shifts gears to play pianist Tianxu An's reading of Tchaikovsky's 'Scherzo-Fantaisie in E-flat Major' [Alpha], where it shows a pleasing lightness of touch that ensures every note sounds convincing.

**VERDICT**  
 The RS520 is highly flexible and packed with features, but you can just connect your favourite speakers and get on with enjoying the music. It's a superb contender in what is a fast-growing sector of the market. ⚡

**HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS**

Power output (<1% THD, 8/4ohm)	250W / 450W
Dynamic power (<1% THD, 8/4/2/1ohm)	248W / 500W / 428W / 235W
Output imp. (20Hz-20kHz, Pre/Amp)	333ohm / 0.066-0.46ohm
Freq. resp. (20Hz-20kHz/100kHz)	-0.2 to +0.1dB/-22.1dB (Amp)
Digital jitter (S/PDIF / USB)	~10psec / ~10psec
A-wtd S/N ratio (DAC/Amp)	109.1dB (0dBFS) / 74.5dB (0dBW)
Distortion (DAC, 0dBFS/Amp, 10W)	0.0017-0.0045%/0.0035-0.35%
Power consumption (Idle/Rated o/p)	42W / 625W (1W standby)
Dimensions (WHD) / Weight	346x127x328mm / 8.2kg

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